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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7691  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1243  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4787  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8331  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5893  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1625  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1695  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000429

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO  
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/28/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)  
SUBJECT: AID FLOWS, BUT NOT MUCH

Classified By: Poloff Chelsia C. Wheeler for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (SBU) Summary. Poloff and LES were turned around at a military checkpoint on the border between Rangoon and Irrawaddy Divisions on May 29. Prior to being stopped, we observed heightened security in several towns and villages in Rangoon Division that were damaged during the cyclone. The head monk at one monastery told us that probably 40,000 people in his township died during the storm. He also said that Save the Children had arrived soon after Nargis struck and delivered rice and tarpaulins, among other goods. End Summary.

12. (SBU) In an attempt to visit some of the cyclone damaged areas of the Irrawaddy delta region, Poloff and LES were turned around at a military checkpoint on the border between Rangoon and Irrawaddy Divisions on May 29. The uniformed and Special Branch police manning the checkpoint were initially willing to allow us to meet with the local colonel. The colonel, however politely declined our permission to enter Irrawaddy Division and promised his welcome once we return with permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Social Welfare. No foreigners will be allowed into the delta region without such permission, he said. Later in the day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated to us they would grant permission for the trip over the coming weekend. The strict enforcement of travel permission is not unexpected, something that several diplomatic staff and foreign aid workers have encountered.

13. (SBU) Prior to reaching Irrawaddy Division, we drove through several towns and villages in Rangoon Division that had been damaged during the cyclone. Along the road, we observed approximately 20 trucks filled with police in full riot gear. Some trucks were stopped along the road and others were moving, presumably toward Irrawaddy Division. Large crowds of storm victims that had reportedly migrated to the roads in hopes of obtaining aid were nowhere to be seen.

14. (SBU) In Kungyangon Township, home to approximately 2 million people, approximately 40,000 died in the storm, according to the head monk at Ma Soe Yein Monastery, which has been active in relief efforts. He estimated that despite the relatively regular flow of relief supplies to this town, which is a little over an hour drive from Rangoon, only 25 percent of the people in the township had been helped. He lamented that donors went to government relief camps and did

not make efforts to reach people in the more remote villages.

¶5. (SBU) One notable exception, he observed, was Save the Children (STC). STC arrived only four days after Nargis struck and returns regularly with supplies, including tarpaulins and rice. (Note: Many of our consignment shipments to STC include these tarpaulins.) It is one of the few NGOs working in the area, and the monk praised the group's willingness to carry supplies on foot to villages that have no access to roads or waterways.

¶6. (C) Comment: The GOB may be opening up to aid, but the reach of that aid, even in more accessible areas, remains limited. Even a short distance outside of Rangoon, hundreds of thousands of people have not yet been reached. We will continue testing the GOB's promises of openness. They appear determined to try and maintain control over who goes into the delta. Despite these obstacles, our aid appears to be reaching those who need it most. End Comment.

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